

MY MUSICAL PILGRIMAGE

AN UNCONVENTIONAL SURVEY OF
MUSIC & MUSICIANS

BY
HARRY BURCESS

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My musical pilgrimage: an unconventional



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MY MUSICAL PILGRIMAGE.



Photo.]

MELBA as "VIOLETTA,"

[M. Shadwell Clarke.

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An Unconventional Survey
of Music and Musicians.

BY

HARRY BURGESS.

ILLUSTRATED BY AUTOGRAPHED PORTRAITS.

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TO MY FRIEND,
GILBERT ERNEST MURLY,
IN MEMORY OF THE DECEMBER NIGHT, WHEN, IN
THE FOG AND RAIN, WE BECAME BROTHER PILGRIMS
ON THE ROAD OF MELODY.

FOREWORD.

LIFE is a pilgrimage, hard or easy as we choose our fellow travellers. He who prefers the Accumulation of Riches, or the Cult of Fame, or the Pursuit of Pleasure as his travelling companion, may find the road hard and stony, and the object of his pilgrimage a barren spot. But the man who takes with him, as the partner of his joys and sorrows, the Spirit of Music, is starting on a journey that is to be full of delights, compensations and supreme moments.

Music is eternal. Along the road of life it provides the weary pilgrim with rich benefits. Mental exhilaration, a more beautiful outlook upon things mundane, poetic inspiration, communion with master minds, glimpses of the

Unseen, and a lifting to higher altitudes of the whole being of the musical devotee.

These pages are to be some glimpses of my musical pilgrimage ; some peeps by the way ; descriptions of the oases and tracks of the journey, and so faithful and inspiring is the Companion I am progressing with that no trace of hardship or disappointment will be found in this chronicle.

Others may travel this way and have greater moments, others may reach higher levels and see greater visions, but to no one can the joy of the road be greater than it is to the writer of these humble pages.

HARRY BURGESS.

Engelberg,

Lower Addiscombe Road,

Croydon.

September, 1911.

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MY MUSICAL PILGRIMAGE

CHAPTER I.

· MAINLY PERSONAL.

I FIRST saw the light of day in the dear, dirty city of Manchester, a city having a strong, virile, musical life, quite unequalled in London. My musical recollections of Manchester are practically *nil*, as my parents came to London while I had still less than a decade to my credit, but there are two incidents photographed by a childish mind that I still retain. A well-known Handelian contralto visited my parents frequently, and I hope that many Manchester musicians remember Miss Howard Dutton in connection with the Charles Hallé concerts. As a child of six, I

was in trouble with a refractory boot lace, and I remember Miss Howard Dutton, for whom I had a certain amount of reverent awe, dropping on her knees, in the street, and tying the lace in a bow quite a number of times until I thought I saw how it was done. Then I had to tie it myself, and I was kept at it, with the lady still on her knees, until the never-to-be-forgotten lesson was learned.

My next mind-picture is the funeral of this lady, as the result of a chill, caught at a "Messiah" recital at the Free Trade Hall. To me, all Manchester seemed in mourning, and the thousands of people who congregated to pay their last tribute of reverence to the loved and popular singer, made a great impression upon me.

My school days have no musical experiences whatever. Nature endowed

me with the keenest love for musical art and for vocal music in particular, but, alas, I was never intended to be an executant. I well remember our school music-master discovering a discordant voice in the class, and making his way from boy to boy until he came to me. We were singing a little German two-part song, and at its conclusion I was sent into an adjoining class-room to have a geometry lesson, on the grounds that the music lesson could not possibly do me any good, and that the geometry might !

But these reminiscences of childhood will probably be a deal less interesting to the reader than they are to me, so I will skip the intervening years and come down to days that have their full complement of musical activity.

My work has brought me into touch

with all sorts of people. From the stars of the operatic firmament, down to the humble chorister, in all likely and unlikely ranks of society I have made friends and acquaintances, and I may say that some of my experiences have been unique, and, to myself at least, deeply interesting.

In these pages I hope to set out some things that are new, some that are worthy of consideration, and some that may be useful to the music lover generally.

I have had fascinating experiences in watching huge audiences of the working classes (audiences frequently numbering two and three thousand persons, and drawn from the East End of London, or from the great Midland and Northern centres) as they hung upon every note of Melba, Tetrzzini or Caruso, and although the words have been in an

unknown tongue, and the music described by those superior persons who should know better as "over the heads of the masses," the audience has sat spellbound and almost breathless, to break into salvo after salvo of deafening applause at the conclusion of the item.

Imagine the scene at one of my Saturday night lectures in a most sordid part of our great Metropolis. The hall is packed from floor to gallery with about sixteen hundred persons of the artisan class, and is in total darkness. Nothing is visible, save, upon a huge screen, life-size coloured portraits of Caruso and Scotti. From some unseen source, the voices of these two giants of the Italian school rise and fall in the most beautiful duet for male voices Verdi has penned, the "Solenne in quest' ora" from "La Forza del Destino."

You have been told that the masses will not listen to songs in a foreign tongue, that they are not interested in operatic music denuded of its action, and that they will not appreciate what they cannot understand, so you will expect this item to be treated coldly.

Wait :

The voices of the two great singers blend softly in a series of exquisite "Addios" and the excerpt comes to an end. As the last note of the orchestral symphony leaves the gramophone's wooden trumpet, the whole mass of sixteen hundred persons breaks into one deafening thunder of applause—applause which never wavers until the reappearance of the portraits of Caruso and Scotti announces that the duet has recommenced.

What is it that has stirred this stolid

and comparatively uneducated English audience into such a frenzy of delight ? Is it the picture upon the sheet ? The introductory preface I have given to the extract ? The gramophone uttering in the darkness these voices of gold ?

Certainly these are concomitants, but the upheaval of this mass of humanity is born of the music. The spirit of Verdi's great melody has gone straight to the hearts of these men and women, and this storm of applause is the involuntary tribute to the Master's genius.

The music—ah, that is it,—the MUSIC has banished the mean streets and the fog outside. The search for work, the struggle for existence and all that is sordid have been forgotten, and for five minutes we are princes and kings in a glorious country of romance and beauty, carried thither by the divine gift of

Verdi's melody. Ah, my masters, do you not find music a good companion upon the hard road of life ?

You have probably read W. J. Galloway's "Musical England" and you may have read also Henry Finck's "Success in music, and how it is won," and you will be prepared therefore to believe that we are rapidly becoming a musical nation. Mr. Galloway's figures are well worth your close attention, and you will not fail to notice that both of these accepted leaders of musical thought pay a tribute to the good work done in musical education by instruments for the mechanical reproduction of music, such as the piano-player, the phonograph and the gramophone.

Now my experience leads me to go farther than either of these gentlemen. I say that one of the principal causes of

the renaissance of music among the people is undoubtedly to be found in mechanically recorded music. I think nothing has happened in recent years that has affected our musical outlook to a tithe of the extent to which it has been enlarged by the gramophone and kindred instruments.

Every man has now the opportunity of hearing *in his own home*, and as frequently as he cares to do so, the voices and instrumental endeavours of the greatest executants the world possesses, as exemplified in the finest works of the greatest composers of all time. And the effect of this is that the constant reiteration, upon the instrument, of music that is poor and worthless, shows its weakness so plainly that the mind calls out for more satisfying fare. You doubt this? Get any disc machine catalogue you like

from your local dealer, get a copy of the "Talking Machine News," or "The Sound Wave," two papers with an immense circulation among enthusiasts, and see what are the titles of records mentioned therein. Handel, Mozart, Weber, Wagner, Gounod, Massenet, Bizet, Rossini, Verdi, Puccini, Tschai-kowsky, Grieg, Sibelius, these are the names you will find most prominent. Musical comedy had its place, the banal has not yet ceased to exist, but the bulk of the records you will find listed are by master melody-makers.

Unfortunately there are many so-called "talking-machines" that are instruments of torture rather than music-makers, and these are responsible for the prejudice that exists against the gramophone in many quarters. But it is an easy matter to make conversions.

The true and educated musician is the first to succumb. His experienced ear shows him that the timbre of the gramophonic reproduction is the reality and not the caricature. I have never yet played over Tetrizzini's rendering of the Pollacca, "Io son Titania," from Ambroise Thomas' "Mignon," to a musician without making an instantaneous convert.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW FACTOR IN MUSICAL LIFE.

SOME years ago, when the Gramophone was but a toy, I saw immense possibilities for it. I knew that scientific investigators of a high order were engaged upon its elaboration and perfection, and the more I considered the matter, the more convinced I became that this instrument would, in the course of time, become a great factor in our national musical life and education.

That I was right is borne out by the testimony of musical men the world over. Only recently when addressing the Sheffield Festival Chorus, one of the finest choral bodies in the world, Sir Henry Wood said :—

“Have you all got a gramophone? If not, get one at once, as it is of the utmost educational value to all musicians. In listening to the records of such great artists as Patti, Melba, Caruso, Plançon, Battistini, etc., you will hear what true, right vocal tone is. As a vocal teacher of twenty-five years’ experience, and as a devotee of the great Garcia method, I can assure you of the tremendous value of this invention, and how grateful we vocal teachers are for the aid it gives us in showing our pupils what right and beautiful tone is, especially in the provinces, where it is often impossible to hear the greatest voices.

“I firmly believe that if all teachers of singing had a Gramophone in their studies as well as the finest vocal records, as published by the City Road Gramophone Company, and could let their

pupils hear the brightness and ring of good voice production, it would do more to dispel and eradicate our fluty, hooty, breathy, dull, weak, English voices, than hundreds of pounds spent on useless lessons and in fruitless argument and controversy."

Having my views confirmed by such an authority when the period of comparative perfection has been attained, emboldens me to think that some of my other views and opinions may be equally right, but of these time will show.

When the Gramophone ceased to be an instrument of torture and by a steady process of evolution arrived at its present state of perfection, it became part of the managerial policy to secure records from the greatest musical artists of every country. At first, the stars were not easily persuaded. They had everything

to lose by making records that would place an impoverished and mechanically imperfect reproduction of their efforts before the public, and so strong was the prejudice against talking machines generally that the process of conversion was a slow one.

But as the improvement in the art of recording came to be more fully known, the artistic mind saw the immense possibilities in this new field of musical advancement, and star after star succumbed to the tempting offers that were made to them. Henry T. Finck tells us that in one year alone £11,000 was paid to Caruso in royalties on the sale of Gramophone records, and Melba's autobiography also gives wonderful figures of her royalties. And instead of the prestige of Caruso and Melba suffering, they have to-day millions of admirers

to whom they would be but names were it not for the Gramophone records of these two voices of gold. We are also told that Caruso owes his first American engagement to a well-known impresario hearing some of the newly-made records.

I well remember the sensation caused among Gramophone enthusiasts when the news leaked out that Melba had capitulated. Melba wished to send her aged father in Australia a Christmas gift that should be personal and unique, and she hit upon the brilliant idea of having a set of Gramophone records made of her principal songs and arias. The recording *séance* took place, and we can imagine the delighted father's pleasure at such a wonderfully personal souvenir of an absent daughter.

Naturally enough, it soon became known that Melba had made a series of

brilliant items, and the public absolutely clamoured for them, to find that the matter was wholly a private one, and that the records were not to be published commercially. So great was the disappointment expressed in every quarter, and so many eloquent appeals were made to Melba from all classes of society, that the diva gave way and a series of twelve superb items was publicly issued. Whether Melba was justified in believing that her admirers were really anxious to possess her records may be seen from the fact that over 150,000 were sold within a few weeks.

I mentioned that Melba's records were made for the special purpose of giving pleasure to an aged parent, and that reminds me of other recording enterprises for special purposes. The great Tamagno called the recording experts to

his Palace on the Adriatic and commissioned them to make a special series of items which were afterwards placed in steel receptacles and deposited at the bank to await the coming of age of Tamagno's two tiny grand-children. Tamagno has passed from his former triumphs into the Great Hall of Song, and with what supreme interest must these two young people look forward to the attainment of their majority, so that they shall hear the voice of their illustrious grandfather, speaking to them literally from the grave ?

Many private individuals have really elaborate record collections, and I know of one enthusiast who has something over 2,000 records beautifully classified. A large album contains approximately 230 programmes of concerts which can be given from this repertory, and as

these programmes have excited much interest among gramophonists, I will give at random a few items from this list of concerts.

We shall find such programmes as "A Sacred Concert of Catholic Music," "A Sacred Concert of Protestant Music," "Selections from French Comic Opera," "Voices of the Departed," "Selections from Modern Comic Opera," "Echoes from Many Lands," comprising a complete collection of all the national anthems of different countries of which records have been made, as well as representative selections from the national music of those countries; "A Military Band Concert," "Pianoforte recital by Mons. de Pachmann," "Recital by Wilhelm Backhaus," "A Tetrizzini Concert," "Echoes of Merrie England," "Their Majesties' State Ball

Programme," "Nelson Centenary Concert," "The Gregorian High Mass," and a whole series of "Half Hours with the Great Composers," each of the latter being confined to the works of one composer.

From Palestrina to Puccini, from the earliest plain song to the most intricate polyphony of the modern school, examples of all styles by all composers, and by nearly every executant of note are to be found in this collection. Soloists, orchestras and musical organizations unknown in this country all have their place, and the collection becomes a veritable reference library of musical composition.

The Trustees of the British Museum decided two or three years ago that the perfection of the recorder's art compelled them to take advantage of it, and to

secure for posterity a series of records of contemporaneous musicians and public speakers. The Gramophone Company undertook to supply the necessary records, not in the composition form as supplied to the public, but the actual metal master records, from which the commercial duplicates are made. These metal masters are imperishable, and they are locked away for a period of fifty years, at the end of which they will be accessible to the public, who will then have a great privilege which has been denied to us. Our descendants will be able to compare the voices of the stars of their day with the vocal efforts of the great singers of this generation, and we envy them this blessing most exceedingly.

What would we not give to be able to hear and compare with Patti, Melba, Tetrassini and others, the great voices of

Pasta, Grisi, Malibran, Jenny Lind and a thousand other queens and kings of song, whose names rise up before us, as we close our eyes in contemplation of the glories of the past? Their days were the "good old days," but surely the days of the future have greater wonders in store, and our children's children will not only revel in the musical art of their own day, but they will have in their record collections all the great artistic musical achievements from the commencement of the twentieth century.

CHAPTER III.

MELBA.

“ Singers come and singers go, but Melba lives in our hearts for ever ” were the words of a telegram handed to Melba just before she made her entrance as “ Mimi ” in Puccini’s “ La Bohème ” at the commencement of the Covent Garden season of 1911. Melba was very touched at the sentiment expressed, and the ovations at the close of each act must have proved beyond doubt that time cannot lessen the hold this great artist has upon the affections of metropolitan music-lovers.

The opera house was over full. Celebrities of every walk of life were in evidence, and from the first words, heard

from behind the closed door of the attic-studio, it was evident that the vast audience had assembled to do homage not to Puccini's masterpiece, but to the genius of Melba.

From "Mi chiamamo Mimi" to the last note of the dying struggle, Melba was in finer voice than I have ever heard her before. That wonderful penetrating quality, that gift of artistry which renders the softest whisper audible even at the back of the far distant gallery of this great opera house, seemed more remarkable than ever, and in the "big" passages, in the "O soave fanciulla" the volume of melody poured out in harmony with that of John McCormack without the slightest trace of effort. It was the consummation of art, founded upon the most superb technique, and the most glorious of natural gifts.



To
Mr. Burgess
from Nellie Melba 1900
Nellie Melba

Photo.]

NELLIE MELBA.

[H. Walter Barnett.

A celebrated critic has told us that "Melba sings first and acts afterwards," but on this occasion, her personation of the fickle Mimi was instinct with dramatic grace. We almost forgot Melba and the opera house, as we sat and pitied the wilful little milliner in her struggles against the inexorable hand of fate. The picture was complete : our eyes, our ears and our hearts in unison called out sympathy for the sorrows of the little band.

The greatest of prime donne are, at times, almost unable to prevent some of the situations of operatic tradition from being ludicrous, but Melba was so truly the "Mimi" of Murger that the "picture" was complete. It is (to me at any rate) the height of absurdity that Rudolfo should add, between acts one and four, the dainty little bed to the meagre ac-

coutrements of his studio, and the necessity for Mimi to climb into the said bed to die picturesquely, also provokes a smile.

But Melba handled the matter so gracefully, so naturally, that I saw nothing but the tragedy of the girl's dying moments. The whole work was a beautifully enacted drama, not a selection of melodies strung upon the attenuated frame of a highly improbable story, as is so frequently the case.

Melba's voice is very difficult to describe, because I know of no other of similar tone colour with which to compare it. Its clarity is amazing, as is the ease with which it is produced. In all the brilliant roulades of Verdi and Rossini, dangerous flights from the lowest to the highest notes of her range, and dazzling shakes of almost inter-

minable length, there is never the slightest trace of effort or harshness. There is never that pose, that "Prepare ! Be alert ! I am about to startle you," that so many prime donne affect, and the beautiful, round, luscious melody is as rich and pure on the E in alt as it is upon the middle notes.

Massenet once called Melba "Madame Stradivarius," and the conceit is pleasing, for the voice resembles no instrument so closely as a violin. I remember another critic describing Melba's notes as a string of perfectly matched pearls. Every pearl a gem, and no one of greater beauty than its neighbour. Every note round, clear, and perfect, alike to the connoisseur and the uncultured.

In the early days of Melba's married life, the ambition to be a great lyric singer came to her, and after a course of

study, she sought out several impresarios, with results disastrous to their perspicacity. Sir Arthur Sullivan could find no place for her in the Savoy chorus, Alberto Randegger could not see his way to accept her as a pupil, and other musical caterers were sufficiently blind to their own interests as to completely overlook what might have been a gold mine to them.

So the disappointed aspirant decided to seek the advice of one who was probably the greatest authority upon the voice then living, the renowned Mathilde Marchesi. Crossing over to Paris, Melba presented herself at the Marchesi studio, and the audition commenced. At the conclusion of the song, Marchesi rose from the piano and walked from the room without a word! The rebuffs had been so frequent, the disappointments so bitter,

that this last slight of all broke down Melba's fortitude, and sinking on a divan, she buried her face in her hands. But the flow of bitter tears was arrested by the voice of Marchesi calling to her husband upon another floor of the house, "Salvatore, Salvatore, come quickly, I have found a star."

Returning with her husband, Marchesi took Melba's hands in hers, saying, "Mrs. Armstrong, if you are serious and will study, I will make of you something wonderful," and Marchesi's prophecy, thanks to the natural gifts of her pupil, was fulfilled in a few months.

Melba found many ready to assist her. She possesses that charm of manner which makes it easy for men and women to give her their friendship and help, and she has repaid what she has received with unparalleled generosity.

I do not want to make this chapter a catalogue of names, but I could mention a great number of aspirants to musical honours who have had the way made easy by Melba's kindness and forethought. Some years ago, when collecting data for my lectures, I approached Melba with fear and trembling, asking certain favours which seemed to verge almost on the unwarrantable, and the charming manner in which my wishes were met, and the kindness I received on that occasion and many times since, are not lightly esteemed nor easily forgotten.

A further proof of Melba's generosity is one that will be a lasting testimony to her, and a perennial benefit to the study of English vocal art. Melba is founding, in connection with the Guildhall School of Music, a "Melba Scholar-

ship," which is to provide the winning student with a course of training for the operatic stage. What a lasting monument this will prove.

Melba's first appearance in opera was at the Théâtre Monnaie, Brussels, in "Rigoletto," on October 13th, 1887, and her first appearance in opera in England was at Covent Garden, under Augustus Harris, in 1888, the opera being "Lucia di Lammermoor." She has a repertoire of some twenty-five operas, including such widely divergent works as "Faust," "Roméo et Juliette," "Esmeralda," "Mignon," "Lakmé," "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," "Traviata," "Otello," "Manon Lescaut," "La Bohème," "Il Pagliacci," "Tannhauser," and "Lohengrin," while, as I write, the lurid "Tosca" is being rehearsed. "Mimi" is considered by many critics

to be her greatest achievement, and while others have told us that "Elsa" is her favourite *rôle*, I have Melba's authority for saying that she has no favourite part, as she never sings in an opera that she does not like.

I would strongly recommend my readers to take the first opportunity of hearing Melba upon the concert platform. If you would have the supreme pleasure of hearing the diva in our own tongue, coupled with an exhibition of her art that the operatic stage does not wholly demonstrate, you must hear her in Tosti's "Goodbye," with its poignant grief; in Bishop's "Lo, here the gentle lark," and "Bid me discourse" (the latter showing you the wonderful and delicious Melba trill *in excelsis*), and in similar ballads and songs. Her gramophone records of these compositions have made

her art familiar with thousands of persons who have never heard Melba *vivâ voce*, and they have proved the finest and most valuable advance-agents a star singer ever had.

In summing up the qualities that have made Melba a Queen of Song in both hemispheres, I would put down absolute tone purity, amazing technique, and intense personality. And the last is not least. Melba would have been a great artist with her natural vocal gifts only, but she is a great-souled woman too, and the combination has proved irresistible. Among those who know her intimately, Melba, the woman, is as great as Melba, the artist.

NOTE.—The author wishes to express his indebtedness to Madame Melba for her kindness in correcting the proofs of the above chapter, and in supplying certain data. The dates of Madame Melba's first English and Continental appearances vary with different biographers, but those given in this chapter are authentic.

CHAPTER IV.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH MELBA.

IN my lecture on “Marvels of Sound Reproduction, or the Romance of Sound” nothing seems to delight my audiences more than a description of a recording séance, in which I am assisted by the lantern and gramophone. This peep behind the scenes seems to have a peculiar fascination for all and sundry, and it is only my limited power of graphic description that makes it less interesting and romantic than the reality.

Come with me and I will take you into the *sanctum sanctorum*, the musical holy of holies. To-day there shall be no strict rule against the presence of any unconnected with the *séance*, and I

will endeavour to give you some moments that will live in your memory.

We step into the lift that takes us to the entrance to the "Hall of Song," but, in an antechamber, we are confronted with a Dragon in the path, who challenges our right to enter. I utter the "Open Sesame," and lo, the Dragon is transformed into a good fairy who ushers us in, and who may even be persuaded to regale us with anecdotes and experiences of the celebrities it is her duty to receive. We glance around at the walls covered with volumes of music, comprising every conceivable composition, from Comic Opera to Gregorian Mass, and from instrumental solo to the polyphonic phantasmagoria of the Strauss school, for "stars" are sometimes forgetful, and arrive without their scores, so a full library is maintained. And if

we have time to spare, the good fairy of the reception room will let us peep into her autograph book, which contains the signatures of every musical celebrity one is likely to think of, and a great many that one is not. I do not know that cupidity is one of my vices, but I confess I have cast longing eyes upon this valuable volume, and perhaps it is as well that I cannot reach its resting-place in the absence of its owner !

We pass into the recording room, which comes as a surprise to some of us. It is simply a square chamber, unfurnished. One of the walls is a screen of frosted glass and pitch pine, through which projects the mouth of a narrow recording trumpet. A piano, a pipe organ, and seats for an orchestra are almost the sole contents of the room, but some chairs are brought in for our

comfort. The well-known 'cellist, Mr. W. H. Squire, is tuning his instrument, while the recording experts are engaged in conversation with Mr. Landon Ronald, the brilliant composer and conductor who is to be the accompanist. Suddenly, a telephone bell rings, and we are told that Melba has arrived. All is electrical at once. The door of the lift swings open and in another second Melba is shaking hands and making the plain, dull room brilliant with her personality.

A few words of murmured conversation, and Melba announces that she will sing the Bach-Gounod "Ave Maria." Before the actual recording commences, a "time" trial is made. One of the experts times the rendering with his stop watch, and then the recording apparatus is put into working order. Behind the frosted screen, shadowy

forms are seen at work, for here it is that the great secrets of gramophonic perfection are enshrined. None of the officials commercially engaged in the building are ever allowed to peep here, the *artistes* are rigidly excluded ; none but a little band of men devoted to the recorder's art have entry to this shrine of wonder. We see the mouth of the trumpet, but what is taking place at its invisible end we can only guess.

Melba moves into position, Squire and Landon Ronald are at their instruments, a voice gently gives the signal, the accompaniment throbs out into the room, and Melba's voice rises in gentle appeal, soon to be joined by the rich tones of the 'cello obbligato. Suddenly the singer stops, and turning to the company, expresses her regret that she will have to begin again, as she is not quite in touch

with the spirit of the work. A few minutes interval, and the song is recommenced, but after a few bars Melba turns to us, saying, "It is no use, I cannot sing it. I feel *cold*," and she tells us that the absence of an audience and the sight of only the recording horn frequently neutralizes that state of spiritual exaltation which is necessary for the accomplishment of the *artist's* best work.

Landon Ronald is told that the *séance* must be postponed, but, large in faith in the power of the great master passion of music, he allows his hands to stray with seeming carelessness over the keys, and out of a murmur of rising and falling tones, there steals into our senses a wild, weird melody that sets the blood coursing. Our feet ache to hurry into movement, our bodies long to break into action, for the wonder-worker at

the piano is elevating us into a state of excited animation by a melody that has magic in its notes. It is with Melba as with us. Suddenly she cries "Stop, I am ready now," and standing before the trumpet, she pours into it such a burst of melody that the recording-room vanishes, and we seem to stand in some great temple wherein a soul is revealing its inmost depths to its Maker. We have lost all consciousness of Melba and of ourselves ; we know nothing, hear nothing, but that one passionate supplication, and, as the voice rises and falls, and then dies away in the soft syllables of the archangel's salutation, we feel the tears rising to our eyes. We are lost in an ecstasy of melody, and it is only the conclusion of the song that brings us to earth again.

Thanks are uttered, farewells are exchanged, and Melba hurries away, leaving behind her, not the bare room we knew before, but a chamber which has heard things unspeakable, a chamber that must always be to us as the shrine of a great experience.

Some days later, the record is placed in our hands, and we hasten to try it over. And the Vision, do we see it again? That is the test. We do not speak. We close our eyes and the spirit of music works within us. The record ends—no word is spoken. But—again these tears. Do not *they* give the answer?

CHAPTER V.

ADELINA PATTI.

Adelina Patti—what a wealth of memories the name recalls ! The greatest exponent of lyric art for a period of over fifty years, the idol of the people throughout the length and breadth of two continents, and the most prominent figure in the operatic world for the last half of the nineteenth century. A singer who was born a “star,” and who seemed when almost a baby to have the full resources of the most superb technique, must indeed, have been favoured of the gods. At the early age of seven, when listening to her elder sister, Amalia, striving hard to master the shake, the tiny Adelina

stopped her, saying, "Why don't you do it like this," giving a natural and perfectly irreproachable trill.

Adelina Patti's first public appearance was made at the same early age of seven, and from that time onwards she sang regularly for a period of over fifty years. Of the drudgery of vocal training she knew nothing. Hers was indeed the royal road, the vast resources of her art being inherent.

Add to her magnificent technique and superb voice the gifts of great personal beauty, intense charm of manner, splendid dramatic ability, and we have a combination probably unequalled in the annals of music.

Dr. Hanslick wrote in 1879, "Her eternal youth borders on the miraculous," and *twenty-nine years later*, the *Daily Telegraph* commented on her

appearance at the Albert Hall as follows :—

“Need it be said that the diva, whose first contribution to the programme was the immortal ‘*Voi che sapete*,’ delighted her admirers yet again, and that they knew not how to make enough of her? As the result, Mozart’s famous air was supplemented by ‘*Pur dicesti*,’ in which the shakes were compassed with all the old time perfection of finish, while Gounod’s ‘*Serenade*’—with the violin obligato played by Mischa Elman—proved on the singer’s lips a thing of such irresistible charm that nothing would content her hearers but a repetition of the song. Later in the afternoon came Tosti’s ‘*Serenata*,’ and, even after so many favours, the audience would not suffer Madame Patti to depart until she had recalled countless former triumphs by giving them ‘*Home*,



Photo.]

ADELINA PATTI.

[*Dover Street Studios, Ltd.*

Sweet Home,' sung once again with that perfect feeling for its tender sentiment which has never failed to stir her hearers to the depths of their nature. Madame Patti's voice was better than it had been for years, and it was therefore, a matter of course that a marvellously beautiful and inspiring performance should arouse immense enthusiasm. But even those best accustomed to the Patti ovations of the past have seldom seen a more thrilling display of homage than evoked by yesterday's magnificent display of art."

It is a rare thing for an artist to have the power of charming, almost to frenzy, audiences the world over for a period of more than fifty years, and the care that Madame Patti has taken of her wonderful gifts makes us her debtors to a greater extent than she may think. The great

prime donne of the past have had a brilliant but brief sway of a few years, but Patti has been able to rejoice the hearts of three generations with her superb artistry, a consummation reached only by the most scrupulous care, and possibly much self-denial. Patti's wealth would have permitted retirement years ago, and might have surrounded her with such luxury as would have worked havoc with her physical fitness, and in Patti we have an artist making her first consideration in life the perfect preservation of her divine gifts, and this is a matter the art lover can never too highly appreciate.

In my drawing room hangs a fine panel portrait of Patti charmingly autographed, and given to me for the purpose of illustrating my lectures. After the lantern slide had been made

from it, I took the portrait to a picture-framer, and laid especial emphasis on its value. I requested the most scrupulous care so that the picture might be returned to me suitably framed and in perfect order.

The man promised every attention, and seemed duly impressed. He took the portrait in both hands and examined it very attentively, and it seemed to me that he might be reviving for a few seconds the memory of hearing the great diva on some past occasion. Suddenly a smile broke over his face, and a look of glad recognition came into it, as he said : “ Adelina Patti—Adelina Patti—Oh, yes, of course, I know. That’s the converted actress who is going to speak at the Salvation Army barracks on Sunday.”

Patti’s records were first issued to the public at the time of the General Election

of 1906, and telegrams were despatched to musical instrument dealers all over the country advising them of the fact. As the telegraph wires were fully engaged, and highly congested, with the transmission of election results, some of the telegrams were delivered as late as three o'clock in the morning, and more than one worthy gramophone dealer was brought out of bed and down to his front door by an urgent summons of a telegraph messenger, to learn that "Madame Patti has made a series of records."

Of all Patti's records, nothing approaches in popularity her "Home, Sweet Home." I have before me a copy of a concert programme dated February 27th, 1855, upon which it is announced that Signorina Adelina Patti would sing Bishop's "Home, Sweet Home," and at her farewell concert at the Albert Hall,

London, in 1906, fifty years later, " Home Sweet Home " was the most appreciated item.

The working men and women of our country, the artizan class, have found the Gramophone perhaps a greater joy than any other section of the community. The Patti Concerts have been beyond their means, and it was the Gramophone which gave them the first real insight into the diva's art. At the conclusion of one of my lectures, an Australian lady came to me and said, " When I go back to Australia, I shall speak of you as a public benefactor, for your action in bringing Patti and her art before this great audience entitles you to such a distinction. You have given these people to-night examples of the finest vocal art in the world."

CHAPTER VI.

LUISA TETRAZZINI.

DURING her provincial tour of 1909, Tetrizzini took cold at Leeds, and her medical adviser absolutely forbade the fulfilment of her Bradford engagement the night following. Our English fog had proved too much for the Florentine nightingale, and so the Bradford audience had to be content with a glimpse of Tetrizzini, who showed herself, but was unable to sing, and the programme was given by the members of her concert party.

The night after this unfortunate circumstance, I was lecturing at Bradford to an audience of about 3,000 persons,

and I had with me four Tetrazzini records which had only been published a few days previously. I arrived at Bradford with only an hour to dress, dine and reach the hall, so that I had no chance of hearing of the fiasco of the previous evening, and I was more than a little surprised at the eagerness of my chairman to know whether my musical illustrations comprised any Tetrazzini records. I told him I had four with me, and he then gave me the story of the diva's inability to sing.

In his opening remarks, this gentleman said, "And as Madame Tetrazzini was unable to sing last night owing to her indisposition, you will be delighted to hear that Mr. Burgess has arranged that she shall sing four times this evening, for he has brought her voice in his bag." The applause was immense, and at the

conclusion of the polacca, "Io son Titania" (Mignon), the audience seemed perfectly frantic.

Certain singers seem to have a peculiar affinity for the Gramophone, and in Tetrazzini's case this is really remarkable. The polacca is absolutely flawless, and it is almost impossible to believe the sound is issuing from the gramophone horn. With the instrument under cover of darkness and a life-size portrait on the screen, Tetrazzini's presence seems an actual accomplishment. Another extremely brilliant and perfect record is that of the "Carnevale di Venezia" variations (part 2). In this amazing display, Tetrazzini is not satisfied with the vocal difficulties of the composition, so in the final variation she adds the phrases scored for the flute to her own intensely difficult fioriture!

For my own personal delectation, apart from public exhibition, I prefer Tetrazzini's rendering of Tosti's "Aprile." In this ballad, Tetrazzini displays the Patti touch, and makes a direct appeal to the heart. I would advise every admirer of Tetrazzini to hear the "Aprile," with its dainty charm and nuances of joy and pain.

The story of how Tetrazzini came, in 1908, to Covent Garden almost unknown, and sang before a half-filled house has often been told. An unknown singer rarely creates any stir among the Covent Garden *habitués*, but after the first great aria, the whole house was galvanised into enthusiasm, and a Tetrazzini boom set in.

In one night the singer rose from an unknown soprano to a "star" of the first magnitude: all musical London flocked

to hear Luisa Tetrazzini, and the newspapers devoted columns to the new exponent of the florid school. Ticket speculators reaped a rich harvest, seats sold and re-sold at inflated prices, and the cables to America carried more extravagant encomiums than they had been burdened with for many a day.

Tetrazzini's upper register is phenomenal. It reaches F. in alt., a note she sings frequently in "*La Sonnambula*." A feat of vocal dexterity, almost unbelievable unless one has witnessed it, and one that never fails to rouse an audience almost to frenzy, is that of sustaining the E. in alt., while the singer stoops and picks up from the stage a handkerchief she has previously dropped. The feat seems impossible ; the evidence of eyes and ears almost untrustworthy ; but Tetrazzini makes light of it.



Photo.]

LUISA TETRAZZINI.

[W. & D. Downey.

I am often struck with the peculiar fact that while audiences the world over love and appreciate (and will pay high prices for) colorature singing, no composer since Verdi has chosen to write for this popular demand. Why is this ? Has the florid vocal style of composition proved too much for latter day composers ? Patti, Melba, Sembrich, Tetrazzini and other queens of the florid school have come before us season after season in well-worn operas that nothing but the prima donna's contract could keep alive, and why ? Simply because modern composers give these cantatrices no works of the school to which they belong, and *the only school to which the opera-going public will flock in its thousands at high prices !*

During the Beecham season of 1910, at Covent Garden, I was delighted

with the art of Miss Mignon Nevada, a young artist with a great future. In "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" this delightful singer proved herself a personality to be reckoned with, and her brilliant floriture again raised the hope within me that as young singers of great promise come forward modern composers may recognize the demand for florid airs. Puccini, with all his gift of melody, has done nothing for the colorature singer, but let us hope it is not too late, and that we may soon hear our queens of song in works that shall combine the beauty of modern polyphony with the brilliance of florid singing.

Florid music does not mean music without soul. Tetrizzini frequently pours forth a group of notes that move us to tears by their sheer sensuous beauty. To a representative of the *New York Sun*, Tetrizzini said, "You can train the voice,

you can take raw material and make it a finished product ; not so the heart. It is there, or it is not there ; if it is not there you will never move an audience to tears. You will never find sympathy responding to your lack of sympathy ; tears to a tearless voice, never ! ”

Instead of a plot that is ludicrous and inane, with orchestration almost as thin as in the days of Handel, let us imagine Tetrizzini in a work which has a coherent and virile libretto, coupled with orchestration rich with all the resources of modern polyphony. With ample opportunities for the display of her incomparable art, you would here have a veritable feast, an epoch-making work.

But shall we ever see such a work ? Have latter day composers lost the art of vocal writing ?

CHAPTER VII.

CLARA BUTT.

A name to conjure with, especially among the music lovers of the Midlands and the musical North, is that of Clara Butt, and at the conclusion of items such as Liddle's "Abide with Me," scenes reminiscent of the Patti triumphs occur.

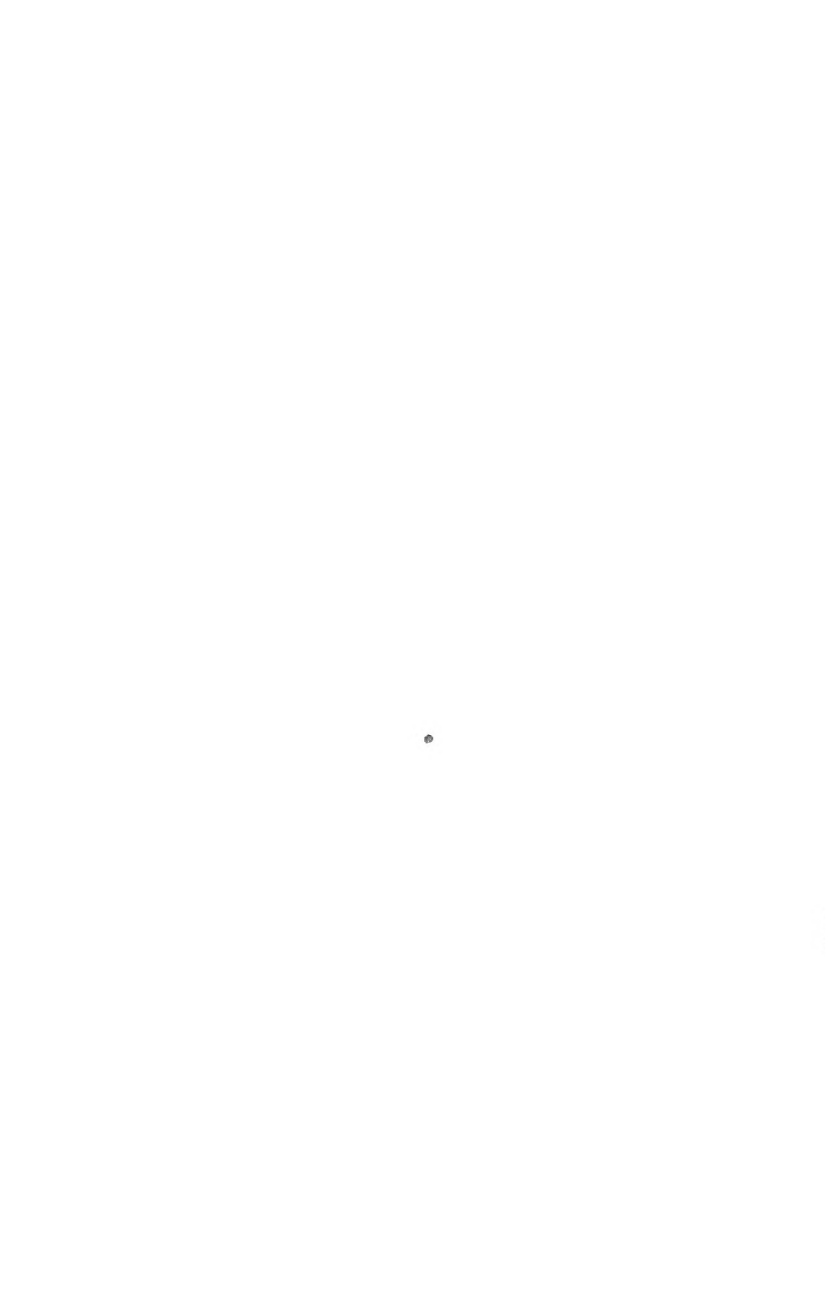
Clara Butt's vocal organ has been called "the Voice of the Century," and some years ago I had an object lesson on the truth of this. It was at one of the Good Friday concerts at the Crystal Palace, and, perched right at the topmost gallery, over what used to be the great stage, I heard every word of the songs of this artist. Think of the size of the



Photo.]

CLARA BUTT.

[*Lafayette, Melbourne.*



auditorium ! Ella Russell, Charles Saunders and Santley were in the programme, and their songs floated fitfully out over the vast area, the melody being audible, but the words lost entirely. Every syllable from Clara Butt came clearly up to my crow's nest, although at such a distance the singer appeared little more than a speck.

The first appearance of Clara Butt was at the Lyceum Theatre in December, 1892, in a Royal College of Music performance of Gluck's "Orpheus." Her stature, the nobility of her vocal organ, and her general impressiveness, excited the keenest interest, and her progress along the Way of Music has been triumphant.

In September, 1910, Clara Butt made a series of Gramophone records that are splendid. They are probably too

massive, too noble, for the average drawing room, but in a large hall, or, better still, in the open air, the effect is superb. One of these records, although a regular item in the singer's repertoire, came as a complete surprise to me; as I had not then heard her render it in the '*viva voce*.' I refer to "Il Segreto," from Donizetti's "Lucrezia Borgia." In this excerpt, Clara Butt displays a wealth of expression that is amazing, and entitles her to a high place among dramatic contraltos. The lurid, sardonic laughter is superb and thrilling in the extreme. It revives in me an old longing to hear this great artist in opera, an art form that seemingly has not attracted her since her *début*. Undoubtedly, oratorio and the concert platform make lesser demands upon the singer, but the dramatic ability revealed



Photo.]

[Alfred Ellis & Watery.
Mr. & Mrs. KENNERLEY RUMFORD.

in this grand “*Il Segreto*,” would surely add greatly to her laurels, should the experiment be tried.

It may be that Clara Butt prefers to crown herself with other laurels—the crown that comes to a devoted mother. Mr. and Mrs. Kennerley Rumford are happy in the possession of three children, as the charming illustration on the opposite page will testify. It is to these little ones that their proud mother prefers to devote a great measure of her time, therein following the example of the famous Grisi, who, throughout her career, placed her children before her art. When on their recent Australian tour, a triumphal progress indeed, the little Kennerley-Rumfords accompanied their parents, to the great joy, it will be readily surmised, of the united party. The children of a celebrity usually have

our pity ; neglect and disappointment are frequently their lot, but, great artist as she undoubtedly is, the heart of Clara Butt knows no higher glory than the love of her children.

Kennerley-Rumford, a fine, manly singer, has a great hold upon the affections of the people, and I am sure the platform of Queen's Hall must have a romantic interest for him, and for those of his admirers who know the story, on account of the turning point of his life.

In the days when " Miss " prefixed the name of Clara Butt, these two singers were appearing at Queen's Hall in an old English duet called " The Keys of Heaven," wherein a devout lover offers the lady of his heart the keys of heaven if she will but walk and talk with him. The damsel is obdurate, so a coach and six is offered, then a black silk gown,

which only moves her to derision.
Then,

“ If I give you the heart of my heart,
And we are married till death do us part,
Madame, will you walk and talk with
me ? ”

Kennerley-Rumford had asked the most momentous question of his life, to which an answer had not been given. As they stood before the audience Clara Butt put such emphasis into her reply of “ Yes, I will walk and talk with you,” that there could be no mistaking her meaning, and it is doubtful if Kennerley-Rumford knows whether he walked off the platform, or was carried off by invisible angels.

May the years commenced in such a bond of harmony be long and many for these two singers, so greatly beloved of the English people !

When writing of the duality of celebrity and mother, I am reminded of the Jewish composer, Meyerbeer, and the influence of his mother. Unlike the generality of composers, Meyerbeer came of a wealthy family. His father was a rich Jewish banker of Berlin, and his mother, *née* Amalie Wulf, was a woman of noble character and tender feelings. She was of high purpose, just the woman to have great sons and to train them into men of mark. The mother's influence over her eldest boy was immense. She loved him passionately and guided him wisely, while he in return, felt for her an absolute veneration. She was a true "Mother in Israel," and one who engendered the noblest feelings in those around her.

Just before "Robert le Diable" was produced in Paris, Meyerbeer received

from his mother a letter marked "To be opened after the first representation of 'Robert.'" On returning from the theatre at the close of the eventful night, the composer broke the seal and read:—

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord cause His face to shine upon thee and give thee peace."

Knowing from lifelong experience the love of a good and devoted mother, I can see the thought in the mind of Amalie Beer as she sent her son the words given by God to Moses as the benediction of Israel. If his work was a failure, then her boy would want something to comfort him and turn his mind from earthly disappointment; while, if he had again produced a brilliant success, her message

would come to him as a blessing from the Great Source of all inspiration.

Meyerbeer was so touched at receiving, under such circumstances, the ancient benediction of his people, that he carried his mother's letter on his person, as a talisman, until the day of his death.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WORD UPON HANDEL.

I AM tired of being told that the genius of Handel is overrated, and that his music has had its day. I have heard enough of the critics who would try to wean me with specious arguments from the love of this great master. A weary feeling comes over me when I read in my favourite musical paper, letters from those who would pose as advanced thinkers, depreciating works which are part of the warp and woof of our musical life.

Journeying down to Hull to fulfil a lecture engagement, I read a long diatribe against Handel, and, in particular, the "Messiah." The writer told

us, in no unmeasured language, that the "Messiah" had lost its hold upon the British public, and that we were turning to saner (!) levels of musical appreciation.

Immediately facing my hotel was a large hoarding, and, following my usual custom of making myself familiar with the musical fixtures of the town I visit I scanned the hoarding with interest. To my surprise and delight, I found not less than FIVE PERFORMANCES of the "Messiah" advertised, and these were not free recitals given in churches, but performances for which an admission charge was made.

I should like a photograph of that hoarding, with duplicates to send as salutary correctives to those writers I speak of, for such evidence must surely "give them furiously to think."

Of course, Handel's genius is as powerful in its appeal to-day as ever. Handel lovers are more numerous than heretofore, and because new composers bring us excellent works of modern thought and latter-day beauty, we must not blindly assume that Handel is losing ground.

In another part of this book I have referred to commercialism in art, and I may perhaps be allowed to refer to it again in support of my argument.

A commercial undertaking (especially when it is a limited liability company) puts upon the market those wares for which there is the likelihood of a ready sale. It does not waste its energies in issuing goods for which the purchasing public has no fancy, for that way bankruptcy lies. Consequently, if Handel-worship is dead, you will not expect to

find the Gramophone Company putting its capital into matrices of Handelian airs, and burdening itself with the sale of Handel records.

But glance through the catalogues and see the great number of airs made into records by the greatest singers of England and America, and when you have made your calculation, let one who knows, tell you that the demands for these Handelian records is exceedingly great, for when the demand falls off, the matrices from which the records are made are melted down to reduce locked-up capital.

In 1906 the experiment was tried of recording the whole of the "Messiah," or rather of the whole of those portions usually given at a public performance, and elaborate arrangements were made to secure success. So far, no complete

work of the kind had been recorded, scenes, arias and concerted numbers not having been exceeded, but this was to be a grand attempt on a broader scale. The soloists engaged were Mesdames Perceval Allen and Dews, Messrs. John Harrison and Charles Knowles, while the choruses were rendered by the London Welsh Choir, with a specially formed orchestra, largely recruited from the Queen's Hall body.

The Gramophone Company paid me the high compliment of engaging me to introduce the recorded oratorio to the London public, which I did at Queen's Hall, Langham Place, on October 26th, 1906, prefacing the recital with a few remarks upon the life and times of Handel and the circumstances connected with the composition of the "Messiah."

The large audience and representatives of the press received the records with great cordiality. The *Daily Telegraph* said, "So accurate was the reproduction of the timbre of the various soloists' voices, that it was difficult to believe that Miss Perceval Allen, Madame Dews, Mr. John Harrison and Mr. Charles Knowles, the singers from whom the records were made, were not actually upon the platform," while the now defunct *Tribune* stated that "the records were absolutely undistinguishable from the human voice." Among the many interested persons in the large audience, I think none felt the novelty of the recital in so great a degree as did Miss Perceval Allen and Mr. John Harrison, who had come to hear themselves sing.

If Burns had said "O wad some

power the giftie gie us to *hear* oursel's as ithers *hear* us," the perfecting of the gramophone would have answered his plea, for so boldly does the instrument proclaim defective production or intonation, that singers have been known to return to a course of study after hearing themselves as they sound to the ears of their fellow-men.

As many gramophone-lovers will probably scan these pages, it may not be out of place to mention a few of the finest Handelian records. Undoubtedly first is Mr. Robert Radford with "Honour and Arms" (Samson), for both in point of singing and recording, this record is flawless. Not only do I consider Mr. Radford to be our finest English bass, but I know of no Handelian singer who is so thoroughly at home in this grand air. For power,

vigor, and beauty of tone, I have nothing finer among my records.

Another grand air is Clara Butt's "Ombra mai fu" (Serse), perhaps better known as an instrumental solo under the name of "Handel's Largo in G." This record shares with Donizetti's "Il Segreto" (Lucrezia Borgia) the distinction of being the most glorious exhibition of her art that our great English contralto has given us through gramophonic instrumentality.

That splendid American tenor, Evan Williams (a name to conjure with among gramophonists) is responsible for "Sound an Alarm" (Judas Maccabaeus), superbly declaimed; while Madame Eleanor Jones-Hudson has to her credit a beautiful rendering of "Angels ever bright and fair," from "Theodora," an oratorio which Handel always considered his



Photo.]

ROBERT RADFORD.

[Dover Street Studios Ltd.]

greatest work, but which posterity has placed far down the list of "il caro Sassone's" masterpieces.

The "Messiah" records are all unusually fine, being at the time of issue quite the most perfect examples of the recorder's art extant. All concerned had put their finest work into the recording of this oratorio, with a really noble result.

CHAPTER IX.

ARE WE A MUSICAL NATION ?

A FALSE and unworthy idea engendered by superficial thinkers and spread broadcast by irresponsible prattlers who accept it without investigation, is likely to go far and to do much damage before it can be overtaken and refuted.

A truth uttered with sincerity, or altruistic motive, is very slow in progress, but meretricious half-truths seem to have a great fascination for many orders of mind.

Therefore it is not surprising to find that we have a reputation both at home and on the Continent for being an unmusical nation, not perhaps among

those who are most competent to speak with authority, but among the huge masses of people who keep a store of platitudes in stock wherewith to eke out their conversation.

Many an Englishman will say dogmatically, "England is not a musical nation," and on being challenged for proof, he will get no further than the argument that "everyone knows it is so."

But is that true ? Are we an unmusical nation ? Let us put platitudes aside and come down to solid facts.

In a Milanese newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*, I read :—"The English have a passion for singing, and in no country in the world can so much vocal music be heard. In London alone 800,000 school children are taught to sing, and yet there is a widespread belief in Europe that the English are not a musical nation."

And I venture to say that, for purely choral music, England has no equal among the nations. Where is the foreign equivalent of the Sheffield or Leeds choirs? I have no great experience of operatic choruses on the Continent, but I know that no foreign body of singers has ever been brought into this country for operatic work that will compare with the superb chorus of the Moody Manners Opera Company, an absolutely British one throughout.

The veteran French composer, Camille Saint Saëns, whose melodious "Samson et Delilah" we are now privileged to hear in operatic form, wrote over twenty years ago, the following splendid tribute to English choral singing :—

"I wish that those persons who deny all musical sentiment in the English people could hear the Birmingham

choristers. This marvellous chorus unites accuracy, rhythm and precise time, fineness of nuance, charm of sonority—everything. If the people who sing thus are not musicians, they acquit themselves exactly as if they were the best musicians in the world. It is to be remarked, if at the last moment other nuances or other movements than those of which they have contracted the habit are demanded of them, they give immediately and perfectly all that is desired. Difficult intonations, dangerous pianissimi on high notes, are nothing to them. That such singers are not trained it is impossible for me to admit, and if one admits it, then a still greater merit ought to be granted them than to those who, being better trained, do not always arrive at the same results. Let us frankly learn to recognize the good qualities of others,

the contrary will injure nobody but ourselves. It is certain that one can sing as well in Paris as in England. The choruses directed by M. Lamoureux attain a perfection which cannot be surpassed. But such performances are only accidental with us, instead of being the result of permanent institutions, because one does not find in France a large enough number of amateurs who love music sufficiently to give themselves up completely to regular rehearsals during any length of time."

Here we have the testimony of a great French composer, that the reputation Great Britain has, fairly or unfairly, acquired of being unmusical, is not warranted by facts, and within the present year further Continental testimony has been forthcoming.

M. Wassily Safonoff, the celebrated

Russian conductor, came to London to conduct the Leeds Philharmonic Choir at Queen's Hall, and he described the body as "wonderful."

"We have no such choruses in Russia as your English ones, nor have I ever met anything like them abroad," was the eulogium paid by M. Safonoff to British Choral singing,.

I think the poor reputation we have as a musical nation is due to critics and others accepting London as the musical standard of Great Britain. A greater mistake could never be made : London is not musical. Compared with the provinces, London is a "back number." Musically, London lacks enthusiasm, knowledge and executive ability. Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, Manchester and other of the big centres are far in advance of London in this latter respect.

Lecturing three or four years ago before the University of Birmingham, Sir Edward Elgar declared that the musical centre of England was not London, but "a town farther north," and while there will be a great difference of opinion as to which town Sir Edward may have in mind, the great body of educated musicians will be in agreement with the statement. The vigorous musical life among unpaid musicians that is a feature of Northern towns is unknown in London, and I cannot give you better evidence of the Northern enthusiasm than to quote from an article by Mr. Gerald Cumberland in "Musical Opinion." In the issue of last December the gentleman says :—

"When the competitions of the Blackpool Festival were over, and before the final adjudications had been made, I

left the Winter Garden in order to catch a late train to Manchester, where I did not arrive until three quarters of an hour after midnight. On the desolate platform stepped twenty or thirty men. Now, Manchester is not like London—it goes to bed at eleven : and, though midnight trams and trains are not unknown, they travel to the places very near at hand. So, looking round at my fellow-travellers, I wondered how they would reach home. They came and spoke to me, and we moved out of the station together. Each of them, without exception, intended to walk home, for they could not afford either a hotel bill or a cab. One singer lived only two miles away : two more lived in the same street, four miles out : and still another lived on the far side of Stockport, a distance of eight miles.

“ ‘And don’t you mind two hours hard walking after a fagging day of travelling and singing?’ I asked one singer.

“ ‘Mind! of course I mind; it’s damned ugly! All the same it’s worth it, and I shall do it again next year.’ I need say no more; a spirit of this kind—a spirit that, I suppose, informs and inspires practically every member of our best choirs—is capable of accomplishing any artistic victory.

“Enthusiasm! What a fine quality it is; and yet how rare it is, and irritating to those who do not possess it. Carping critics declare—and there is still a good deal of truth in what they say—that only people of narrow experience and of still narrower interests are capable of enthusiasm: and, though this view carries with it a certain amount

of condemnation it should be remembered that it is by enthusiasm, and by enthusiasm alone, that any advance can be made in any branch of human endeavour. The Lancashire man, plain and ill-educated though he be, is more truly an artist than any decadent product of southern races. It is mainly owing to Lancashire and Yorkshire choirs that the performance of many of the works of Elgar and more particularly of Granville Bantock have been made possible. Such choral writing as we have even in the 'Dream of Gerontius,' was undreamed of a generation ago : and it is only ten years after the work was written, that it is being given with final flourish and perfection. The choral writing of 'Omar Khayyam' is still more difficult, and, though I admire unreservedly Mr. Arthur Fagg's labours on behalf of this noble

composition and though I find very much that is fine in the singing of the 'London Choral Society,' no unbiassed judge can claim that 'Omar' has been done so well in London as it has been in Manchester by the Halle Choir, or in Liverpool by Mr. Harry Evans' Welsh Chorus. And even these two northern choruses have still a little to learn before they can be said to have reached the last stage of perfection. But it should not be forgotten that neither Elgar nor Bantock would have written the bulk of their later choral work until they had detected in modern choral singing that intelligence, artistic insight and unbounded enthusiasm which are absolutely necessary in the conquering of new and unheard of difficulties."

London will pay big prices to hear (and largely *to see*) virtuosi, but London

will not form itself into unpaid bodies that will compare with the provincial festivals, choirs and orchestras.

And London knows but little of the musical life of the provinces. Quite recently I was talking to a man of some musical attainment about the brass bands of the Midland and Northern Towns, having made particular reference to that magnificent organization, the "Besses o' th' Barn." I found to my astonishment that this gentleman's idea of these brass bands had been formed without any knowledge whatever. He was of opinion that they would be the compeers of the scratch bands sometimes heard outside London public houses, and when I gave him to understand that every member was, though an artizan, a cultured musician ; that "brass" did not mean din, and that the programmes of brass

bands were of the noblest music, he was incredulous. I have heard the "Besses o' th' Barn" render a selection from "Lohengrin" in so perfect a manner that one listened in surprise to hear the tone colour of 'cellos and other strings coming from the brass instruments of which the band is entirely composed.

A few years before his death, Sir Arthur Sullivan was persuaded to conduct the massed band concert at the Crystal Palace, after one of those Brass Band contests which are so popular in the North of England, and he expressed amazement at the perfect finish of the playing, and the absolute tone-control of these artizan musicians. The softly swelling murmur of the most delicate melody coming from over a thousand brazen throats, was a total surprise, it was to him, as indeed to many of the

audience, who expected mere noise in place of musicianly sentiment.

Naturally Londoners will resent my remarks. They will challenge my statement that the provinces are ahead of us in matters musical. But the Londoner who has had provincial experience will, however regretfully, be compelled to admit that I am right.

CHAPTER X.

MUSICIANS AND HUMOUR.

SPEAKING of Sullivan reminds me of a delightful repartee by that caustic humorist and prince of organists, the late W. T. Best.

Sir Arthur Sullivan was directing a rehearsal of the "Golden Legend" at a town in the Midlands, and Best was at the organ. The instrument was neither modern nor adequate, and Best was particularly annoyed at having such a poor vehicle for his genius. At one point, Sir Arthur Sullivan, not altogether satisfied with the stop combination, called out to Best a little testily,

"I don't quite like that, Mr. Best: can't we have some Viol da Gamba?"

“I am sorry,” replied Best, “but there is no such stop on this organ.”

“No Viol da Gamba,” exclaimed Sir Arthur, “who made the beastly thing?”

“I don’t know; his name does not appear on it, but I think he must have been a plumber,” was Best’s witty rejoinder.

An equally smart repartee from Rossini comes to mind. Rossini, the prince of Italian melodists, had a particular antipathy, feigned or real, for Wagner, and on one occasion when entertaining a party of friends, he sat at the piano and called from the instrument a perfect torrent of discord. The din was so appalling that his friends cried out in amazement, only to be told “It’s Wagner.” Incredulously they approached the score.

“Why,” said one, “you’re playing it upside down !”

“Yes,” replied the imperturbable Rossini, “I know I am, but it’s a thousand times worse the other way !”

Many composers have suffered tortures from the popularity of certain of their airs, and I should imagine that the Intermezzo from “Cavalleria Rusticana” has long since made Mascagni wish for a device that would close his ears when assailed by the all-too-familiar melody.

Verdi penned airs that were played, sung and whistled the world over, and it is on record that he found it very difficult to escape the reiteration, artistic and very much otherwise, of his most tuneful excerpts.

I suppose that for many years no musical composition had such an enormous vogue as “*La donna e mobile*,”

from "Rigoletto." Every band, every barrel organ, every soloist upon the "sackbut, shawm, psaltery, or other instrument of musick," rendered, maltreated and mangled it upon every conceivable and unconceivable occasion.

Verdi himself could not escape this Frankenstein of his genius, and when seated in his study, hard at work upon the score of one of his "third period" operas, a barrel organ commenced to grind out the old familiar "La donna e mobile."

Not only was the afflatus disturbed by the introduction of this foreign air, but the master was indignant to hear that it was entirely out of tempo.

Rushing out of the house, he snatched the handle of the organ from the astonished peripatetic musician, saying, as he did so, "This is the proper tempo."

The next day, while deep upon the elaboration of an important concerted number, Verdi was annoyed to hear again the strains of "*La donna e mobile*." Looking out of the window, he saw his torturer of the previous day, and to his amazement and consternation, upon the organ a large card bearing the inscription in bold striking letters, "*Luigi Bertini, pupil of the great Signor Verdi.*"

A good story is told of Sir W. S. Gilbert and an American lady who wished to pose as an authority upon matters musical. After enduring an enormous amount of gush, from which the exigencies of the dinner table did not permit him to escape, the unwilling auditor brought the conversation to an abrupt ending. The lady purred about musicians all and sundry, and finally ventured ;—

"And that dear Brahms! I adore

him. Is he still composing ? ” Said the Savoyard : “ No, Madame. He is decomposing.”

Madame Schumann-Heink had the fortune, good or ill (as you regard the composer), of creating the principal rôle in Strauss’ “ Electra,” a work she afterwards vowed she would never sing in again. We must not place too great a reliance upon the story, that, at a rehearsal, when the enormous orchestra with its many added weird instruments was in full blast, Strauss called excitedly from the dress circle, where he was judging the effect, “ Stop ! stop ! I must have more drums and more trombones. I could distinctly hear Madame Schumann-Heink singing ! ”

CHAPTER XI.

STATE-AIDED OPERA ?

SIR CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD, Mr. W. J. Galloway, and a host of lesser lights have written and said much upon the question of State aid for an English Opera House.

These gentlemen have pointed out that England is practically the only European nation that does not contribute to the upkeep of a National Opera House, and they urge with great insistence, but with somewhat weak argument, that the time has arrived when the already overburdened exchequer should be taxed with sub-sidising a National Opera.

I give pride of place to no one as a lover of opera ; I look forward to the

day when we shall have opera, grand, light, and comique, played all the year round at more than one theatre ; when there shall be a public rapidly learning to love this beautiful art-form ; but I am not blinded by my hopes and longings to the many “ cons ” which far outweigh the “ pros.”

Sir Charles Stanford's great argument in favour of a subsidy is that as the national exchequer contributed in 1907-8 the sum of £17,233 to the National and Tate Galleries, with a further £5,897 to the National Portrait Gallery, and £6,454 to the Wallace Collection, it is the duty of the nation to contribute at least £10,000 per annum to the subvention of a National Opera House.

But look into the argument and see how weak it is. A world-famed artist paints a picture, and, in nine hundred

and ninety-nine cases out of every thousand, he sells it to the highest bidder, probably a wealthy art lover, who places the picture in his private gallery, where it is lost for ever to an art-loving public. To prevent this unhappy state of affairs, the nation steps in, having the necessary funds to purchase great works of art that come into the market from time to time. In other words it secures the work of the artist for the perpetual benefit of the public for all time.

But with operatic compositions the matter is wholly different. When a composer has produced his opera, his first endeavour is, not to sell it to a connoisseur who will lock it up in his own gallery, but to arrange for its public performance as often and in as many countries and towns as he possibly can. The painter sells his picture for a lump

sum, but the composer has to collect his reward from each individual performance. In some cases he gets a sum down from the opera house or society which may have commissioned the writing of the work ; but even then, he has his royalty upon each performance, and the more performances the composer can inspire, the greater his remuneration.

Impresarios are always on the alert, and as soon as a new work is hailed as a success, overtures are made to the composer, and the opera is performed as often as the box-office warrants.

So that the argument which holds good in the case of painting and sculpture, falls to the ground in the case of operatic art.

I can imagine many who read these pages, giving a contemptuous sniff at the mention of that anathematised ex-

pression "Box-office." "As though commercialism has anything to do with art," say these superior folk with their heads in the clouds. But some of us have had experience of the business side of operatic production, and we know how many schemes have come to nought through this lofty disregard of anything but the artistic aspect. Ask Mr. Beecham what he lost on his recent operatic season at His Majesty's Theatre, a season brilliant and daring, and a great artistic triumph for all concerned. Mr. Beecham's answer would probably surprise some of our good friends who imagine that opera houses can be filled as easily as "electric theatres."

No, no ! we do not want a State-aided Opera House. What we require is an *opera-loving public*, and until the masses of our middle class population will

tolerate, let alone demand, opera, the nation must not squander money that could be well used for far more important objects.

And if we have no opera-loving public, how is it to be obtained without a State Opera House ? The year 1911 will see its usual "Grand" and "German" seasons at Covent Garden, Mr. Hammerstein's season at his newly erected Kingsway house, a purely-Italian season under Signor C. de Macchi at the Kingsway Theatre, the usual peripatetic performances of the Moody-Manners, Carl Rosa and Castellano companies, and others. Not a bad list this, for a city which a year or two ago had practically nothing to offer in the way of operatic fare but the Sydnicate season at Covent Garden and Mr. Charles Manners' annual season at the Lyric. Rumour has it that

Mr. Beecham (père or fils) is to build a fine new Opera House, and that one of our largest West End Music Halls is to be converted into another, so that if these plans materialize, we shall have no less than four permanent Opera Houses in London, at least one of which is pledged to produce opera the whole year round.

And I am prepared to wager that the opera-loving public of Greater London will obtain of that delectable commodity all it requires, *or will adequately support*, without any intervention from the State.

Sir Charles Stanford concludes his deeply interesting paper by printing the text of the petition presented in 1898 to the London County Council for an Opera House to be built in London out of the rates, and in another part of the paper he says he has no doubt but that

Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham will soon be actuated by a healthy rivalry to compete. This brings us to Rate-aided, in place of State-aided, opera.

I wonder if Sir Charles Stanford remembers that there are millions of people in the British Isles, people with the old Puritan blood in their veins, to whom the theatre (and, of course, the opera house) and all its affairs are anathema ? To these good people the opera house is a sink of iniquity, and to attempt to make them pay rates for what is so highly offensive to their moral sense would not only be grossly unjust, but would raise again an enormous amount of more or less passive resistance.

And what about the interference with legitimate private enterprise ? I stoutly maintain that if London has four opera

houses giving simultaneous performances (as present rumours indicate the season of 1911-12 will see), the State would be making unfair competition in subsidising a further house. The argument in favour of the State subsidy has always been that the opera-loving public has no chance of cultivating its love for the *art form*, but the season 1911 will see that argument removed.

No one in this country has had greater experience in conducting operatic enterprises than Mr. Charles Manners. His experience covers London and the provinces, and his views are illuminating. Mr. Manners has assured me on more than one occasion that he is willing to run a grand opera season in London upon the highest scale and to make a profit on it without a penny of state aid.

He would engage the greatest "stars,"



Photo:]

CHARLES MANNERS.

[Lafayette, Ltd.

the works should be mounted in the most fitting manner, nothing should be left undone that would add to the artistic *ensemble*, and he would make a profit, if—

If? Simply if a given number of persons would guarantee to take a few seats apiece during the season. In other words, if the public will guarantee to fill the house, Mr. Manners will set before them the finest operatic fare the artistic world has to offer. And it might appear to every opera-lover that so fine an offer should see the public hastening to make such a season an assured success.

But let us investigate.

Two years ago, the scheme was put before the London public, a fine list of works was prepared, including the first performance of three Operas by British composers, Drury Lane theatre was

secured, everything was in readiness ; the printed matter was sent out to thousands of so-called opera-lovers, and *only about two hundred persons showed sufficient interest in this magnificent scheme to take tickets.*

The prices were most moderate, about half the usual Drury Lane charges, but the public would not be drawn.

Now, what do we judge the operatic outlook to be from the details I have set forth ? To me, the judgment seems to be that there are three classes of opera goers : (a) Those who attend Covent Garden as a society function, and who expect to see in the *Daily Telegraph* the opera dismissed in half a dozen lines, while three-quarters of a column is devoted to a description of what the ladies present were garbed in ; (b) those who love opera and are willing to pay for it ; (c) those

who are quite willing to attend when they can go in as deadheads.

Are we to build and subsidise a State Opera House for the first class ? Certainly not. For the third class ? Most assuredly not ! For the middle class, the people who love opera and are willing to pay for it ? No again, for these good folk will have in the seasons to come as much opera, and at reasonable prices, as they can support. And the competition of three or four regular opera houses, with sundry smaller ventures, will mean that the best works will be given in the best style at the lowest charges.

And what more can any serious and practical-minded enthusiast ask for ?

CHAPTER XII.

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN.

READERS of these pages may think I make an astounding statement when I say that one of the most important musical movements England has seen for many years has come from without, and, above all, from the United States ! But the more I consider the matter, the more convinced do I become that the advent of Oscar Hammerstein in England is an epoch-making event in our musical life, and I will give my reasons for this belief.

Since the days of Handel, operatic enterprise has been one of the surest ways of losing money. Fortunes have been made seldom and lost frequently, works

have been composed, produced and forgotten, and in the year 1911 the musical masses of this country are no nearer being lovers and supporters of the art-form we call grand opera than they were when Handel wielded the baton. Covent Garden has never succeeded in making opera more than a fashionable pursuit, the Beecham season of 1910, while an artistic triumph, must be written down a financial failure, and, on the whole, matters seem to have advanced not a jot with the passing years.

Strange to say, although the demand for opera has not increased, literature upon the subject has grown apace, and our publishing houses have done nobly in an endeavour to foster the little desire that has appeared opera-wards. Quite a multitude of books dealing with operatic subjects have been issued within the last

three years, and the daily and weekly press has also contributed admirably to what many of us have hoped might prove an operatic renaissance.

And while musicians generally, and opera-lovers in particular, were bemoaning the failure of the Beecham season to advance this art-form in the public favour, feeling as we did so that all chances of a revival were at an end, the news came that Oscar Hammerstein was coming to London to start a campaign.

And in no spasmodic or experimental manner. "Mighty as an army with banners" is the Hammerstein method of progression, and so elaborate were the advance notices that the whole scheme seemed too highly coloured to be possible.

We were told that a magnificent opera house was to be built, but London

scoffed. The whole thing was too preposterous. Not even Oscar Hammerstein would venture his capital after the Beecham season. These and similar comments were heard on every hand.

To-day, a superb opera house, capable of seating nearly 3,000 persons, and having cost approximately a quarter of a million sterling, raises its imposing frontage on Kingsway, a concrete testimony to the enterprise and organizing ability of this great American impresario.

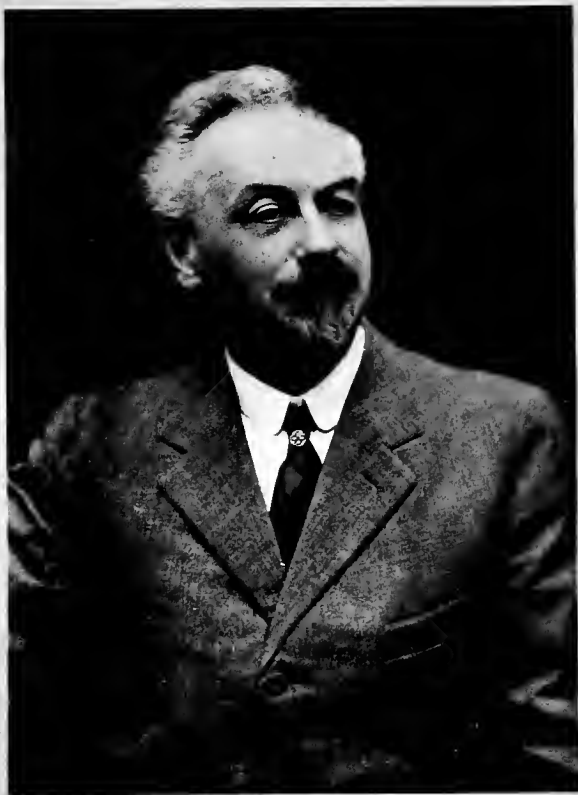
Oscar Hammerstein is no novice at operatic enterprise. His wonderful seasons at the Manhattan Opera House in New York, also at Philadelphia and Chicago, are written large in the annals of American musical history. Under his auspices Melba, Tetrazzini, Renaud and Gilibert have appeared, while Campanini has been his conductor.

The story of Hammerstein's first season at the Manhattan reads like a romance. Opera was given on four nights and one afternoon each week, but, owing to the competition of the older Metropolitan opera house, with its large subscription, and its high reputation, Hammerstein was soon playing at a loss.

Melba was due to appear in "Traviata" about the third week of the season, and so bitter was the fight, and so big the odds against Hammerstein, that her friends advised her not to cross the Atlantic, as the season would have ended in failure before she could arrive.

Melba, however thought and decided for herself. "I like his pluck," she said, "I will not fail him," so she cabled the date of her departure.

The Melba première came and passed off amid scenes of the wildest enthusiasm,



Oscar Hammerstein

Photo.]

OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN.

[Mishkin Studio N. Y.]

and the success of Oscar Hammerstein's great bid for public approval was emphatic. Opera was given every night and the directors of the Metropolitan decided upon a truce with their powerful opponent. An agreement was drawn up under which Oscar Hammerstein was to disconnect himself from all operatic enterprise in America for a period of ten years, and so, from such an unthought-of origin, comes London's great operatic opportunity.

The greatest characteristic of this intrepid impresario is a sublime faith in himself. He knows his powers, his talents, and his genius for organization so surely that he has no qualms for his ultimate success. He says,

“Unaided by anybody, financially or otherwise, I am by the erection of this edifice, paying the highest possible

tribute to musical London, if not to England ; my confidence in its musical taste and culture is unbounded.

“ My long career as a Director of Grand Opera, my enthusiasm for the cause, my abstinence from connecting art with commercialism, are well-known factors, and are bound to bring about success to my undertaking, aided by the proverbial appreciation of the English in whatever is ‘ great and good.’

“ Grand opera can only succeed when it is presented ‘ grand ’ in every detail ; it must be grand in the auditorium and on the stage ; ‘ grand ’ in singers, musicians, scenery and costumes ; its Director and staff must be imbued with the loftiest of purposes. Unhampered by any influences, I have succeeded in what will be found an incomparable ensemble. My singers are artists, great

artists, belonging to the front rank of their noble profession.

“ In the compilation of my repertoire, I have given preference to works possessing dramatic interest combined with musical value.

“ To be successful, I must not teach ; I must interest. Operas new to London will be presented in quick succession ; the opening week will see the production of Nougé's and Cain's ‘ Quo Vadis,’ and the following one, Massenet's ‘ Don Quichotte.’ My orchestra, numbering over 100, will be directed by men of greatest musical distinction ; the chorus number 125 and the ballet 60. My repertoire is :—

In French.

Quo Vadis.

Don Quichotte.

Thaïs.

Le Jongleur de Notre Dame.

Herodiade.

Manon.

Werther.

La Navarraise.

Les Contes d'Hoffman.

Faust.

Roméo et Juliette.

Lakmé.

Le Prophète.

Les Huguenots.

Louise.

The Violin Maker of Cremona.

Carmen

In Italian.

Norma.

Il Trovatore.

La Favorita.

Siberia

Dolores

Otello.

Il Pagliacci.

Cavalleria Rusticana.

Lucia di Lammermoor.

Rigoletto.

La Traviata.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia.

Aïda.

Andréa Cheniér.

Un Ballo in Maschera."

The building is superb. Imposing and substantial as is the exterior, it is internally that the London Opera House will come as a surprise to most of my readers, for the architect, Mr. Bertie Crewe, has undoubtedly given London its finest auditorium. Enriched by every device of the painter and sculptor, planned and furnished with lavish expenditure, the whole building impresses and delights. A great parterre of stalls, two entire circles of boxes, and two huge

balconies provide seating accommodation for nearly three thousand people; while the upper balcony, with its upholstered arm chairs, numbered and reserved at two shillings, is going to revolutionize popular opera-going. Here, indeed, is a boon to that portion of musical London that has to look at its purse, and the fatigue of long and weary waits in the street, which have previously been the lot of those who patronized the popular priced seats, will be no more.

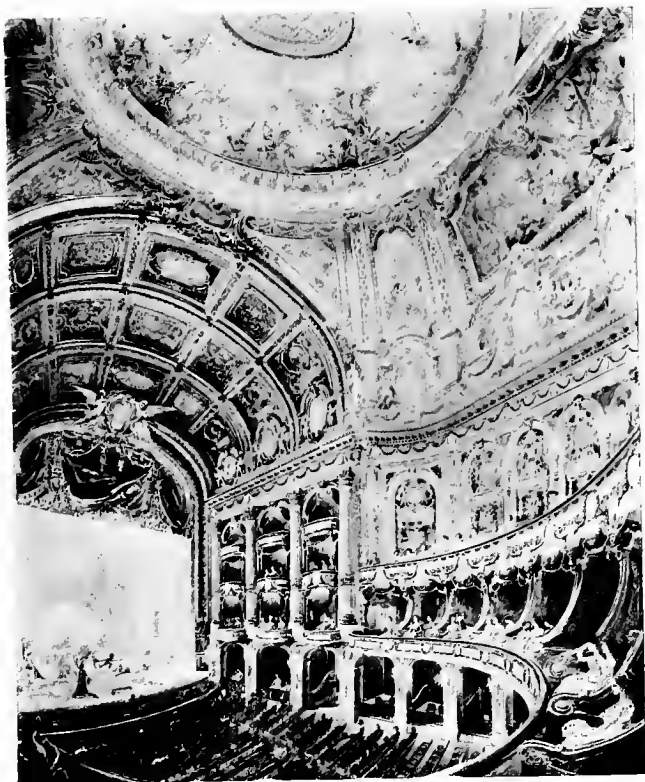
I was not satisfied until I had tested these balcony seats, for I hold that much of Oscar Hammerstein's educational work is to be done in them. Everyone can afford his two shillings "to see how a little opera going will sit upon him," to paraphrase Handel's biographer, and I am delighted to see the whole field of French and Italian opera opened up to

the masses under such genial circumstances. I tested the view even from the back of the balcony, and found it perfect, but the acoustic properties I shall have to test at a later date. My escort took me for a complete tour of the vast building and the architectural and mechanical wonders made an impression almost equal to that conjured up by the artistic possibilities. The great stage, one of the largest in London, has no rake, but the slope of the parterre compensates. In the huge scene dock is stacked the scenery for nearly thirty operas, while in the lofty property room, I watched the preparations of thrones, chariots, the furnishing of heathen temples, the jewellery and ornaments of ancient and savage courts, together with all the panoply of the operatic stage.

On another floor, I heard the noble

chorus rehearsing, and this room, indeed, was the hardest of all to tear myself from. Then up again, to see nearly two hundred skilled workers preparing the wardrobe. Workers in cloth, painters on silk and satin, jewellers and embroiderers were turning out beautiful examples of their handicraft, while from racks that make a total extent of some hundreds of yards, hang the habiliments, male and female, of the crowds who will nightly people the stage.

This one man venture, this American invasion, will have a far-reaching effect upon us. In fact, I think that the great question whether or no grand opera can be popularized in this country is going to be answered once and for all. If Oscar Hammerstein succeeds, the problem is solved. If he fails, it is a certainty that our generation will see



THE LONDON OPERA HOUSE.

By courtesy of the architect, Bertie Crewe, Esq.

no other attempt, for Oscar Hammerstein is bringing every resource of art, finance and thorough experience to bear upon the matter.

Will Oscar Hammerstein succeed, or will this Napoleon of Opera find London his Moscow ? What Oscar Hammerstein says usually is, and he says he has come to stay. Will musical London add to its shame, and this noble building to its palaces of variety, or will the London Opera House be the turning point in the history of Opera in England ?

CHAPTER XIII.

VOICES FROM THE AUDIENCE.

It is not at all an uncommon thing for me to find at the end of a lecture someone waiting to tell me of a memory or an experience I have recalled.

One night, I had used as an illustration, a brilliant cornet solo by Jules Levy, played by another gifted Frenchman, Eugène Joly. As I prepared to leave the hall, an elderly man stepped up to me and asked to be allowed to thank me for the great treat I had given him. As far as I can remember, his own words were :

“ You cannot understand, sir, what I have been through to-night. I have had the most wonderful experience in my life. I used to be in Jullien’s Band at the

Crystal Palace in the old days, and our first cornet was Jules Levy. As you may know, Levy had a slight malformation which enable him to get some wonderful effects of triple tonguing, and he used to compose items specially to show off his wonderful powers in that way. Nobody could ever play Levy's pieces as he played them, and I never expected to hear his " Whirlwind " again. But to-night, directly you started that piece I was back at the Crystal Palace in the old days. I saw Jullien conducting, and Levy playing the solo part, and it was so real that I forgot everything until your record ended." And tears came into the narrator's eyes as he thanked me again for recalling a few moments of past, and, perhaps, brighter days.

On another occasion I was at King's Lynn, and one of my illustrations was

Patti's "Home, Sweet Home." Under cover of the darkness the hall keeper came to me and said, "When this hall was opened, over thirty years ago, Madame Patti performed the opening ceremony, and she sang 'Home, Sweet Home' then. I never expected to hear her sing it again, and I've kept the programme, printed on blue satin, wrapped up in tissue paper. My missus will be sorry she is not here when I tell her about it."

One evening two gentlemen came to me to know whether I believed in Spiritualism, and my answer in the negative disappointed them greatly.

Seeing that there was more behind the question, I made an opening for conversation, and this was the tale unfolded.

The narrators of the following extraordinary experience were sitting by the

fireside enjoying some Gramophone music, the particular record being the *Berçeuse*, from Godard's "Jocelyn" (known as "Angels Guard Thee"), sung by Mme. Michailowa, of the St. Petersburg Court Opera House.

Half-way through the record, the narrators were amazed to hear a second voice joining with Michailowa in the most beautiful harmony. Neither gentleman spoke a word, but at the conclusion of the air, it was repeated. This time the second voice commenced earlier in the record, and the harmonies were, if possible, even more beautiful. Suddenly the gate latch was heard to "click," the postman made his way to the front door, and as the first sharp rap of the knocker resounded through the house the "spirit" voice ceased abruptly, leaving Michailowa to finish alone.

“Now,” argued these gentlemen, “what greater proof of the existence of a spirit world around us could be secured?” and their failure to convince me greatly disappointed them.

I gave the matter no further thought, until it was brought to my notice some weeks later. I was lecturing before a large audience in North London, and was using as an illustration Melba’s rendering of Bishop’s “Lo, here the gentle lark.” We had reached the second part of the song, when suddenly, out of the darkness rang delicious cadenzas, of almost equal purity to her own, joining Melba’s brilliant roulades in a burst of melody that was almost divine. The audience was electrified, and I was astounded as the two voices completed bar after bar in such clear cut melody.

This was indeed a spirit voice: no

other explanation would suffice, and I imagined that the Spirit singer of my former friends must have had me for a marked man until an opportunity came for my conversion. From this time onward, I should have to take a different view of the Spirit world, I should have to be more tolerant of those I had hitherto suspected of mental weakness—when, horror of horrors, the glorious notes of the spirit voice changed into the hideous yell of an angry child in the balcony.

To say that the audience roared with delight is to put the matter very mildly, and it was some time before little ripples of laughter, breaking out from various parts of the hall, ceased entirely.

At the conclusion of the lecture, the mother of the refractory child brought the little one on to the platform to

apologise for the disturbance, and I was able to comfort the maternal heart with the assertion that the incident would give my audiences some entertainment in the future. The mode of dressing gave me no clue as to the sex of the child, so I ventured to hope that the little one was not a girl, as having begun to interrupt the poor lecturer at such an early age, she might grow into a Suffragette, and be guilty of even worse interruptions. "Suffragette, indeed," ejaculated the indignant mother, "I should think not ; I bring all my children up respectably."

Another interruption, not quite so quaintly interesting, took place at Exeter. A tremendous uproar suddenly arose in front of the platform, and I was quite unable to proceed. My lectures are always given in darkness, so that the cause of the bangings and thumpings and

other noises was not apparent. Suddenly a voice from the "wings" said "It's all right. It's only a gentleman having a fit. He usually has one during the lecture."

On November 15th, 1907 (I have to be particular about that date, as another "Harry," better known in the lecture world than myself tells a somewhat similar story, and I don't want to be accused of plagiarism), I was lecturing at Bromley, and, owing to the peculiar construction of the platform, I had to stand in such a position that my back touched the lantern sheet. This meant that should I wish to see the picture on the sheet, I should have to lean forward and risk toppling over into the audience.

My lantern is fitted with a roller-curtain device, and after each song, the curtain rolls down over the portrait in

approved operatic style, an effect which causes much interest when seen for the first time. In the course of the lecture I was showing some pictures dealing with scenes in the recording room, and I had occasion to turn to the sheet to point out certain details. To my surprise I found the curtain still showing, so I began to extemporise to give my operator time to get out of any difficulty he might be in. Suddenly the whole audience of about 2,000 persons tittered, greatly to my discomfiture, but I proceeded, hoping for the correct slide. Again came a titter, this time more emphatic, and I felt decidedly hurt. Suddenly the whole of my hearers broke into a prolonged roar of laughter, so I resigned myself to silence, feeling that I might at least be allowed to participate in the joke, whatever it was.

The laughter ceased as suddenly as it commenced, and by the twinkling eye of the lantern I knew that the curtain was rolling up, so I recommenced my discourse.

While motoring home, my assistant remarked, "It's a pity we couldn't do that every time. It took, didn't it?" "Do what?" said I, completely mystified for the second time during the evening. "Didn't you see what was making the people laugh?" and then came the story. It appears that a large bluebottle, in a dormant condition, had got in between the condenser and the lens, and as soon as the heat from the lantern roused him into a belief that spring had suddenly arrived, the fly started to walk about on the face of the lens. The audience saw upon the sheet a beautiful picture of a huge fly, nearly

eight feet across, with the colours of the slide tinting his body with charming effect. The wings were perfectly transparent, and glittered with every movement, while the huge eyes could be seen distinctly. The roar of laughter that so discomfited me greeted the appearance on the sheet of a gigantic hand, endeavouring to "shoo" the fly away.

I thanked my operator for his ingenuity in suggesting that we might open a fly farm to keep ourselves provided with similar laughter makers, but decided that I would rather rely upon humorous incidents of my own provision.

I was lecturing from the pulpit of a large Wesleyan Chapel in the heart of Leeds, and while the Gramophone was reproducing the voices of Caruso, Scotti, Sembrich and Severina in that glorious "Bella figlia dell'amore" from "Rigo-

letto," I felt a tug at my coat tails, and looking down, I saw in the darkness a white face at my feet at the head of the pulpit stairs. Bending down, I had this whispered to me. "Excuse me sir, but I'm an old showman, and I want to thank you for this treat. I used to run a big diorama, but I lost my voice, and so I have come down in the world. This is the real thing, sir, an intellectual treat, and if only I could have had your Gramophone and your lantern twenty years ago, I should have been little short of a miracle worker."

Once, in the East End, I saw a man in the gallery raise his arm as if to throw something at me, and through the darkness, came a little ball of paper, which fell on the platform. On opening it out I found it to be a page torn from a cheap pocket book, and hurriedly

scrawled under an address in Kingsland was this, "Dear Sir, this is a real splendid evening. I am delighted. Thank you."

And how folks remember one who has given them supreme moments in music! I was recently at Manchester, lecturing from a platform where Madame Kirkby Lunn, when a young and unknown Manchester girl, had frequently sung. My chairman told me that he gave this great English contralto one of her earliest engagements, "and," he added, "if you have anything of hers with you, you might see if our people will remember." Briefly mentioning the circumstances, I proposed to give Kirkby Lunn's grand rendering of "He shall feed His flock," and was greeted with cries of glad recognition from all parts of the house from those who could remember the singer appearing years ago. Man-

chester is properly proud of this splendid artist, and my audience testified to it in no uncertain manner.

It has always been my ambition to stimulate my lecture audiences with a desire to enter more freely into the great realms of music and musical understanding, to fire their zeal to study and think deeply upon this great art, and I am frequently made happy by testimony reaching me, sometimes indirectly, to the effect that I have helped someone else to become a pilgrim along the Road of Melody.

A year or two ago, it occurred to me that I might have a better idea as to whether my lectures were helpful or not to the working classes if I asked for essays from the members of my audiences. The opportunity came, and when visiting a large hall packed with members of the

artizan class, I offered a series of book prizes for the best essays upon the lecture.

The result was deeply interesting.

Some of the essayists showed a keenness of perception that was highly gratifying, while others gave evidence of having sound musical appreciation. But there were some who seemed to have little or no idea of musical terminology or values, and these essayists were guilty of some terrible "howlers."

One lady distinguished herself by speaking of "Madame Clara Butt's wonderful *tenor voice*," and went on to say, when speaking of Tetrizzini, "How wonderful it was of her to give, in the Carneval di Venise, an *immitation of the ocarina*, as well as her own beautiful singing." Those who have heard Tetrizzini in the air named, will readily

understand that the "immatation of the ocarina" is the concluding variation, in which the singer renders both the vocal part and the phrases scored for the flute.

Another lady essayist writes of the same selection, and says, that in it, Madame Tetrizzini renders two notes at once. Wonderful as Tetrizzini is, I am afraid that two notes at once is even beyond her powers. The ocarina seems to have obsessed some of my hearers, for another writer states that "the ocarina was very dear to the composer, Weber, who wrote a lot of music for it." In the eyes of latter day superior critics, that would be an even greater offence than Holbrooke's use of the English concertina !

The same writer speaks of Madame Tetrizzini's rendering of Donizetti's

“Quando rapito in estati,” remarking that “those who have an ear for music were charmed by this item, but to those who do not possess this divine gift, it sounded as nothing.” Surely, to judge from the way in which musical critics write of Donizetti’s works to-day, they cannot, according to my essayist, “possess the divine gift.”

One gentleman seems to have been carried away by the glamour of his subject in constructing this effect :—

“Melba’s voice possesses a richness and fulness combined with great beauty, and high pitched as the composition was it was sung to perfection, her last top note absolutely crowned and made up for all the preceding part of the *rôle* ; it was wrapped up worthily by the ideal quality of tone which ensued with the final climax of

the rendition which was all the way through a delicious, enchanting success. I was carried away by that one note, and my mind wandered to the orchestra where I thought the exquisite melody was emitted. I could not realise for the moment that it came from the voice of Melba, it did not seem possible to me that the larynx could be capable of such wonderful strength. The note was faultless and magnificent, it was quite new to me to hear this attainment.

“Tetrazzini has great charm and loveliness of sound in her voice which holds one enthralled by the clear liquid and pure bird-like notes, and the inspiring mellow cadences issuing from the wonderful voice suggested something far removed from earth, and uncommon strains fell upon the

ear and enraptured the captivated listener.

“Caruso’s voice is unquestionably and undoubtedly an out-standing feature. The exaltation with which the notes were given, the glorious swell, the true ring of resounding triumph made it a theme to marvel at.

“It was good to hear the brilliant and exhilarating prominence of the quality and excellence of the notes. The extreme capableness and incomparableness of the powerful compass in his voice. The elevating of the singing was sensational, supreme, and had an attractive and irresistible fascination. The intense emotion and fervour claimed attention, and the effectiveness made one feel the deep perception for the beautiful. The singular sweetness and strength which

was conspicuously displayed in that remarkable and difficult *rôle*, 'La Donna e Mobile' from *Rigoletto*. The firm hold he has over his voice, the perfect command and control, the way in which he completely sways his audience by his unique power, is positively a discernable fact.

"That he gives to the utmost the full scope for his vocal organs and most ably avails himself of the opportunity afforded him was plainly characterized and he is seen at his best. He is indeed master and victor of his ineffable and heavenly voice, and it can be said of him without fear of contradiction that he is the tenor that stands alone and who has reached the zenith unrivalled."

You may smile, if you will, at this composition, but if you look again, you

will see that the writer's soul has been touched by the magic of melody. His brain and hand ache together to put on paper the great mysteries that music has unveiled to him, and so I go on my way rejoicing that another pilgrim has visions by the way of things almost unspeakable.

And as a last selection, one of those tributes which are so flattering, and, at the same time, distinctly helpful:—

“We feel that the aim of the lecturer is not only to amuse and elevate, or even to educate his audience, but that he feels he has a message to deliver, and that message must be given in a manner most calculated to impress itself on the minds of the people to whom it is brought.”

Your true pilgrim has no thoughts for flowers in the path. His eyes are strained

for the goal of the pilgrimage. But tributes such as this are very refreshing, coming as invigorating breezes to the traveller, and the road is easier for the music of thanks by the way.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PILGRIMAGE PROCEEDS.

AND so the pilgrimage proceeds. The days come and go, bringing with them the worries and anxieties inseparable from a busy life, but the great Spirit of Melody cheers the way, making the dark places light and joyous. The Companion I have chosen, the fountain of delight that is always present, brings gladness, not only to myself, but to those who travel with me. And not only to those who are my intimates. Other wayfarers pass on, and, in passing, hear some notes of the great chorus that is ever eloquent on the Way of Melody. As these pages will show, a word of thanks, a little tribute of praise, some unlooked-

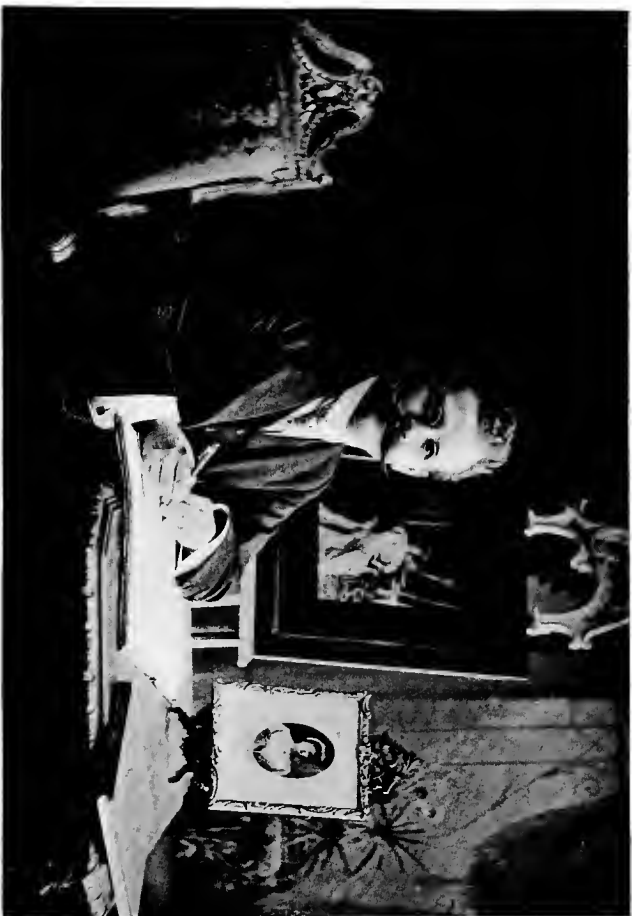


Photo.]

THE AUTHOR.

[Bender & Lewis, Croydon.

for account of help unconsciously given, come to me from those who are as ships that pass in the night, persons I may have never seen, and who will probably never hear me again, and so I go on my way rejoicing.

Often, as I stand before a great audience of people, whose faces are not visible, but whose outlines show dimly in the darkened hall, I lose myself in contemplation. Sometimes I feel a telepathic influence, as though a fellow mind is calling to me from the crowd of faces before me : sometimes I wonder whether I shall give birth to an idea that shall lodge in the mind of one of my hearers, and go out of the hall to be repeated and dwelt upon ; sometimes I ponder upon the uncertainty of life, and whether it will ever be my privilege to address any of the souls before me again.

And as from the wooden trumpet of the Gramophone pours out the melody of Melba, or Caruso, or Clara Butt, I watch the mingled emotions that the Spirit of Music is conjuring up in the minds and hearts of those before me. There are the smiles of gladness, the tears of joy touched with pain, the echoes of remembrance, and the deep, lasting feeling of glad contentment born of the appreciation of the art of the musician.

Verdi had supreme moments while he lived, Wagner knew something of the growth of his art in popular favour, Sullivan learned from public applause that his work was approved of men, but none of these, nor even of their greatest executants, could stand apart as I do, and watch the melody stealing into the soul of every hearer, making plain, dull

faces light up with happiness, and the world a good place to live in. Melba and Caruso have their triumphs. They hear the deafening applause and see the waving hands that greet the last notes of their arias, but it is not vouchsafed to them, as it is to me, to analyse the effect of every phrase, to watch the delight of an audience deepen, to stand—a being apart—and see the Spirit of Melody play upon work-tired multitudes and transfigure them.

The artist is intent upon the execution of his art. To him the audience is only a phantasmagoria, whilst I am able to keep my hand upon its pulse, to see the rising excitement, and to know before hand touches hand in the salvo of applause whether the message of the music has gone home.

It would seem strange, perhaps, to

Caruso, for him to stand beside me on the platform, to see his portrait upon the sheet, and to hear his own glorious voice pouring out the "Di quella pira," or "Vesti la giubba," but it would be stranger still, and infinitely more interesting, for him to watch the play upon the audience. With mind unfettered by the demands of execution ; he would see the effect of his vocalization bud, blossom and fruit in the space of four short minutes, and he would know, as he has probably never yet learned, how the applause which greets his *viva voce* rendering is produced by the working of his genius upon the minds and hearts of his auditors.

And these experiences never become commonplace. As the devout server before the altar feels his whole being rejoice in the practice of his sacred

calling, so do I, a humble server in the Ministry of Music, revel in the exercise of efforts towards the advancement of the greatest of all arts, and a hint that I have been helpful, or a word of sincere commendation, stimulates my anxiety to push on to higher things.

The Way of Melody is noble : the pilgrimage is a thing of sheer delight, and if these pages prove tedious and halting, if weaknesses are detected, it is the pen of the pilgrim that is at fault, and not the Way itself.

The art of music is so vast—and life is so short ! One learns, loves, creates, and dies ! So much to do ; so little time. Pilgrims drop out, but others carry on their staves, and so, in spite of all, the Pilgrimage proceeds.

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